Refund of money to the Government of Himachal Pradesh

1311. SHRIMATI VIPLOVE THAKUR: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any request from Himachal Pradesh Government regarding refund of Rs. 41.75 lakh pending with the FCI on ground that State excise and taxation department has not issued exemption of sales tax on APL wheat;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether sales tax has already been deposited in the State exchequer;

(d) whether Government of Himachal Pradesh have made several requests to FCI to refund their amount but FCI has not paid any heed to their request;

(e) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(f) the steps taken by Government to resolve the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Food Corporation of India (FCI) have informed that they have received request from the Government of Himachal Pradesh for refund of Rs.41.75 lakh which includes Rs.15.09 lakh towards differential cost of wheat for sale under ITBP scheme out of Public Distribution System (PDS) stocks for the period from 15.12.1985 to 31.03.1986 and Rs.26.66 lakh on account of non-lifting of wheat during 2000-01.

(c) to (f) FCI have informed that out of Rs.15.09 lakh, an amount of Rs.0.95 lakh has already been deposited with the State exchequer and the balance amount of Rs. 14.14 lakh will be refunded after obtaining the approval of the Government. As regards refund of Rs.26.66 lakh, Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Department of Government of Himachal Pradesh has given the requisite undertaking to FCI in November, 2008 that the sales tax, if demanded by the State Excise Department will be paid by them. The matter is under consideration in FCI.

Strengthening the PDS

1312. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Planning Commission has pointed out that it was necessary at this stage for Government to strengthen public distribution system in the country and bring under its net a number of essential commodities;

(b) if so, whether Planning Commission has also pointed out that at present Government's policy was to attempt insulation of domestic prices from high world prices by combining a number of different measures including high subsidies, lower tariffs and export restrictions;

(c) if so, the main points in this regard;

(d) whether Government has considered them; and

(e) the steps being taken to implement them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (e) In the Eleventh Plan document, Planning Commission has recommended that the Government may explore possibility of including more commodities under TPDS, such as jowar, bajra and also pulses which could be introduced in TPDS because of nutritional considerations.

To keep market prices of food articles under check, apart from normal allocations of foodgrains at subsidized prices under TPDS, Government has also released additional foodgrains to States & UTs for APL category of ration card holders and under open market sale scheme for retail and bulk consumers.

Allocations of coarse grains procured for the Central Pool are made to States under TPDS depending upon their willingness to distribute them. Department of Consumer Affairs has formulated a scheme for distribution of imported pulses through TPDS at subsidized prices.

Accident relief

1313. SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that more than 1500 people lost their lives, more than 2000 severely injured and more than 3,000 people suffered simple injuries in train accidents in the last decade;

(b) whether it is also a fact that in view of above, his Ministry has invited international consultants to upgrade Indian Railways' capabilities in services like rescue, extrication, medical relief, restoration of services after accidents, etc; and

(c) whether it mean that the performance of accident relief medical equipment vans and accident relief trains is not up to the mark?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R.VELU): (a) During the last ten year period from 1998-99 to 2007-08, 3309 persons including railway staff lost their lives, 2536 suffered grievous injuries and 4060 suffered simple injuries in consequential train accidents.

(b) International consultants are being considered only for setting up of Disaster Management Institute to impart training to railway employees on best international practices on disaster management.

(c) No, Sir. Accident Relief Medical Equipment Vans and Accident Relief Trains are fully capable in performing the requisite tasks during accidents.

Essential Commodities Act

1314. DR. ABHISHEK MANU SINGHVI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether provisions of Essential Commodities Act are adequate to enable States to prevent hoarding of wheat and pulses, etc., thereby checking undue price rise;

(b) if so, how many traders have been booked, for crossing the limits imposed by the State Governments since August, 2006 when powers under this Act were invoked and regularly renewed every six months till now State-wise; and